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AUTHOR Reitman, Sanford W.
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ABSTRACT

This study advises teacher educators to focus on the micropolitics of teaching to help prospective teachers become more artistically effective in the classroom and more confident of their ability to successfully influence others with whom they interact every day. Being successfully nonconformist requires individual faculty members to find original ways to engage in day-to-day strategic decision making bargaining, and impression-management while pursuing their personal interests interactively with administrators, parents, and students. The study includes a description of a foundations course entitled "Survival Strategies for Classroom Teachers." This course helps teachers to be creative and artistic in their teaching; successfully work with students; handle discipline problems and limitations on time; motivate students; meet heavy administrative demands; and achieve tenure. The ultimate objective of the course is to help the highly creative and idiosyncratic teacher become politically sophisticated. (JD)

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"The Micropolitics of Artistic Teaching: Implications for Foundations Instruction"

A paper presented at the annual Convention of the American Educational Studies Association, Toronto, November 3, 1988

by

Sanford W. Reitman, Professor
of Educational Foundations
California State University at Fresno

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Introduction

I knew a professional artist. He made his living creating things of great beauty--struggling to "perfect form," in the words of Suzanne Langer.[1] He never fully succeeded, but there were enough times that he came close; therefore, he was happy. My friend would have remained in art, despite the well known difficulties of the calling (including an absurdly low income, the contempt of relatives and friends, and almost impossible working conditions). In short, he loved his work as an artist, and that work made him whole.

He was also innocently pure, and insisted on remaining politically aloof in an enterprise which rewards not merely talent, but shrewdness, as well. Because this young man was above playing the political game required of artists, he no longer is able to ply his craft nor to help make a better, more beautiful world via the employment of his unique insights and skills.

He never really had a chance. He was a victim. No one ever explained to him that genius in and of itself is barely tolerated in the United States. No one suggested that he read Erving Goffman's The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life or Strategic Interaction.[2] Had his mentors clearly demonstrated the necessity of supplementing artistry with political astuteness, then today he might be doing something meaningful--creating the works of beauty that he was born to create.

My former acquaintance was not a painter, nor a composer, nor a sculptor. He was an artist of the classroom. He helped children and adolescents learn. He was a teacher. Since he loved his work, it was always play. Recall these simple words of Kenneth Eble: "Where does education begin? Surely it begins in play and continues in play for all our lives."[3] This

adult played all day long with his students, as once he had done as a child. Together they talked and read and constructed and planted and went on educational trips. They argued, they thought--and they solved the problems of the world of children and youth.

Scarcely anyone helped this young man learn his craft--certainly no student teaching supervisors, no "effective school" principals, few other teachers. Basically, he was on his own; in modern parlance, he was "isolated" in the classroom. Yet he loved the work, and thrived on it. Every student was a challenge,[4] particularly those black and Hispanic innercity youngsters on whom most of the other teachers and administrators had given up.

During the seven years that he spent in elementary and secondary classrooms, he was always popular with the students, even though he made them work (play) harder than did most other teachers. And, he had successes that were far greater than most I now read about in the journals and books, with youngsters both rich and poor, black and white, intellectually "gifted" and "slow," psychologically well-adjusted and damaged. He was a teacher. It was "in his blood."

Throughout his short career, this individual never thought of himself as an artist. Yet he possessed what Louis Rubin[5] calls the "hunger" to teach. He had the drive to "perform," about which Harry Dawe[6] writes so cogently. He had the need to perfect his craft in the name of "excellence," which the "A Nation at Risk"[7] rhapsodized about. He had the compulsion to provoke his students to think--and act--to which Maxine Greene alludes at the end of Teacher As Stranger: "There are countless lives to be changed, worlds to be remade."[8] And, he had the spirit of a rebel, which Ignacio

Götz maintains is a sine qua non of being an artist:

> He [the artist] consents to the world but revolts against its indifference. 'By the treatment that the artist imposes on reality, he declares the intensity of his rejection. But what he retains of reality in the universe that he creates reveals the degree of consent that he gives to at least one part of reality.' This is the perennial struggle of the artist. To accept the vocation to be an artist is to accept the call to revolt without end. Art that is not revolt in the context of the absurd is not truly art.[9]

In the final analysis, it was his inability to revolt strategically, with political astuteness that brought about his demise as a classroom teacher, leaving other less capable individuals to ineffectually stumble and bumble about with the hearts and minds of our society's children. Specifically, this gifted artist went too far and displayed "insubordination" to one building principal too many. He was terminated and ruthlessly blacklisted from the "profession," not because he was a poor teacher, but because he failed to understand and assiduously practice what I call the "micropolitics of teaching." The world has lost a precious talent.

Pragmatism in a Different Key

I have long been intrigued with the possibility of improving our present system of formal education. But, I have ceased to believe that American education can be reformed directly as a system. Therefore, my recent scholarly and instructional efforts have been refocused onto the

professional development of individual educators, in whose hands alone I believe hope resides for improving the institution. I am convinced that America needs a new model of "teaching effectiveness," one that conceives of excellence in terms of the artistic metaphor. I believe that teacher preparation institutions can and should be preparing prospective and practicing teachers as what Donald Schön[10] calls "reflective practitioners" rather than continuing to prepare routine craftspeople who are only technically competent, if that.

As contrasted with research on "teacher effectiveness," the scholarly study of genuine artistry in teaching is in its infancy. Artistic teaching is highly effective in facilitating learning. It is superior teaching done by practitioners who meet the stated criteria of the "effectiveness" research movement, but who perform on a far more advanced professional plane than passably "competent" teachers. In the words of Louis Rubin, artist teachers are "great teachers, who inspire students and who have elevated teaching to a fine art. There is a striking quality to fine classrooms. Students are caught up in the learning; excitement abounds; and playfulnesss and seriousness blend easily because the purposes are clear, the goals sensible, and an unmistakable feeling of well-being prevails. Artist teachers achieve these qualities by knowing both their subject matter and their students; by guiding the learning with deft control--a control that itself is born out of perception, intuition, and creative impulse."[11] In the preface to Rubin's important book Artistry in Teaching, he stresses that "great teachers fashion a personal style around their educational convictions; that imagination and inventiveness are far more important than standard operating procedures; and that a passion for enlightening young minds

is the driving force behind master teachers."[12]

Elliot Eisner, another seminal influence upon the redirection of my scholarly interests, describes well what good artists do when they teach:

> ....What we are seeing when we see artists work--on the stage, in the studio, in the concert Hall, and in a **classroom**--is not the absence of rationality and intelligence, but the ultimate manifestation of its realization. Such individuals work with the qualities of speech and gesture, the musician with those of sound, the painter with color, line, and form, and the teacher with words, timing, and the creation of educational environments. What all of these artists have in common is the aspiration to confer a unique, personal order on the materials with which they work. And most work in contexts that are in a state of continual flux. No routine will be adequate, even if routines must be acquired as a part of one's repertoire. The point is that much of what we know and the basis for much of our action rest on inexpressible forms of consciousness that recognize the feel of things and serve the qualities that lead to closure and consummation. When we see such abilities displayed in public, whether on the stage or in the classroom, we should give them their due. The achievement of art is not, after all, a menial accomplishment.[13] [Emphasis added]

The problem that Eisner, Rubin, and most other exponents of reconceptualizing and reconstructing teaching as an authentic art form have failed to address adequately is that the essence of artistic teaching cannot be realized on a macro level--at least not in American society. I have elsewhere[14] attempted to explicate the reasons for this societal incapacity. Basically, the American people view formal education as too functionally utilitarian an institutional activity to permit optimism about the prospect of largescale reform which would allow teachers to do what they ought to be doing: creating an aesthetics of learning.

The hegemony of educational utilitarianism is all-pervasive, controlling the thought/belief/faith structure not only of the general public and their opinion leaders, but many of the most influential schoolpeople and teacher educators as well. American ideological commitment to scientific/technocratic models of schooling and teaching efficacy is ubiquitous. But art requires an image of reality and purpose that is grounded in a less utilitarian zeitgeist, one which conceives of professional teaching in schools as essentially aesthetic endeavor with non-guaranteeable learning outcomes for the individual learner and the larger society. Maxine Greene seeems to have captured this idea of the limited possibilities of art in relation to education's liberating potential:

> ....It must be acknowledged that, for all their emancipatory potential, the arts cannot be counted on to liberate, to ensure an education for freedom. Nonetheless, for those authentically concerned about the "birth of meaning," about breaking through the

surfaces, about teaching others to "read" their own worlds, art forms must be conceived of as ever-present possibility.[15]

A second reason to be skeptical of reconceptualizing teaching on a broad societal plane is that most contemporary educational "experts" assume that people external to the classroom can and must mobilize politically and administratively to improve the conditions of teaching so that teachers may teach effectively. Jack Frymier goes so far as to boldly assert that "policy makers took teachers' power away in the first place, and they are the only ones who can give it back."[16] In this view, teachers are mere functions of the wills of others, the very antithesis of autonomous artists. The currently fashionable "school effectiveness" research movement, for example, stresses the importance of the brilliantly democratic building principal in leading his or her collaboratively dependent teachers to a higher plane of perceived self and instructional efficacy. However, this structural-functionalist notion, while plausible, is as extravagant in its view of the middle-management role vis-a-vis behavioristically passive-reactive teachers[17] as is the misguided hope that the hegemony of educational utilitarianism will end in the foreseeable future. It also encourages further deskilling of teachers by discouraging teacher responsiblity for the consequences of their professional behavior.

As a corrective to the widespread, almost messianic faith in the reformist propensities of the policy makers and school administrators alluded to above, it bears asserting that any teacher entering the lists in this century had best realize that no one will necessarily be available to assist him or her by creating the environmental conditions under which

teacher empowerment and greater instructional efficacy will occur. To place trusting faith in empathetic administrators (or cooperative parents or even "powerful" unions, for that matter), is exceedingly naive and, indeed, dangerous, as teachers who had been promised major reforms since the early 1980s are only now beginning to realize. Some fortunate individuals might find themselves working in such facilitative environments, but I cannot foresee the exceptions becoming the rule. The history of educational reform movements in the United States strongly supports this tough-minded prognostication.[18] Like it or not, most teachers will be required to sink or swim on their own. They will be obliged to develop "internalized loci of control" and a strong sense of "self-efficacy."

The point to be established is that contemporary teachers, especially those who wish to become more effective and artistically engaging in their work with youngsters, must recognize that once they become salaried classroom practitioners, self-reliance will be their only trustworthy guide to professional survival and success. Worse, they must assume a less than appreciative and cooperative workplace environment in which to ply their craft autonomously, particularly in the again forgotten urban innercity core schools where the majority of them will be working by the year 2000.[19]

It follows, then, that teacher educators who insist that teaching, in its essence, is an art form rather than a mere applied science, must abandon their longstanding faith in macropolitical approaches to reform of the occupation. We have a greater obligation then ever to redirect our intellectual attention from the unprofitable macro theoretical cultural scene; and begin to focus, instead, on the individual teacher who seeks our help in becoming as artistically self-directing as one's talent will

permit while swimming on the job, receiving tenure, and ultimately thriving as a creative classroom force to be reckoned with. That is, we must concentrate on helping the individual teacher revise his or her professional self-identity and become artistically empowered, despite the frustrating role constraints to be encountered along the way.

In otherwords, teacher educators are advised to focus on the micropolitics of teaching. Intentionally and boldly. we should teach teachers to be **successful rebels**! Today all teaching, but most emphatically that which entails potentially dangerous non-conformity in the lonely struggle to find original ways to create and preserve the truth in the classroom, involves day-to-day strategic decision-making, bargaining (negotiation), and impression-management by individual faculty members pursuing their personal interests interactively with administrators, parents, and increasingly with students. Artistic teaching involves what E. Wayne Ross, following C. Lacey, calls "strategic redefinition"--"instances of overt deviance...situations where individuals without formal power attempt to change the constraints of a particular situation by widening the range of acceptable behavior in that setting."[20]

Would-be teaching artists sorely need assistance in acquiring the understandings and skills of political interaction referred to above. Without them, discussion of educational reform is hollow. Providing such assistance is the function preeminently of the university professor, for the reasons given. Nothing that teachers of teachers attempt to do in this era of simplistic technocratic models of schooling is more important to the revitalization of the learning process and its outcomes for individual students and society at large, as well as of the demoralized profession of teaching itself.

Implications for Foundations Instruction

Ideally, the micropolitical factors in artistic teaching would be treated throughout the entire pre-service teacher preparation program, as well as in subsequent study of education by practitioners in the field. For example, I have constructed a conceptual model of pre-service teacher education as preparation of professional classroom artists, which stresses development of four fundamental qualities in prospective teachers throughout an intensive two-year "institute" program:

(1) a pridefully creative outlook on the work of teaching by novitiates
(2) a thoroughgoing understanding of the social, historical, philosophical (aesthetic), and psychological foundations undergirding artistic endeavor in learning environments
(3) a sophisticated working knowledge of the technology of the craft of teaching
(4) most importantly, a personal style of classroom performance which non-judgmentally sets off one authentic teacher from another.[21]

As a comprehensive model of teacher education, students would be saturated with opportunities to learn and practice the political skills required for survival as pedagogical artists in diverse educational settings from the first day they entered the institute of teaching arts. Such opportunities would continue throughout their advanced clinical teaching experience until students completed the program and received a teaching position; and beyond.

But, it is a model, an ideal. Teachers currently must receive their preparation in less than ideal circumstances.

Therefore, two years ago, I became involved with "block programs"

on my campus in which half of the requirements for a teaching credential are first taken by the same group of students. I have learned that block students develop more pride and courage as well as political savvy about their chosen careers than conventional students, largely from their peers, with whom they interact intimately on a daily basis. If their instructors, especially those who teach foundations, capitalize on the enormous growth of students' psychological strength generated by the social support structure of such blocks, they can significantly enhance students' political awareness while successfully encouraging them to think of themselves as proud future artists rather than subservient classroom technicians.

Block programs are a step in the right direction, but they too have limitations, not the least of which is the fact that most programs of teacher preparation do not require <u>all</u> credential candidates to enroll in blocks. Hence, a self-selection process takes place whereby only the most affluent and perhaps dedicated future teachers voluntarily enroll. Moreover, block programs are suitable only for the strongest professors themselves, hardworkers who can accept occasional tension (and perhaps more serious rebellion), and turn it around for positive learning ends via their own creative group dynamics efforts.

Probably the most interesting project I have personally engaged in as a foundations instructor interested in helping teachers become more artistically authentic in their work while keeping their jobs in a competency-based, increasingly technocratic occupation has been my annual summer school course entitled "Survival Strategies for Classroom Teachers." It is always well attended by inexperienced as well as veteran teachers from throughout the state of California, even though it is, to say the least, challenging.

Let the syllabus description below speak for itself:

> Practical strategies and underlying principles for working effectively with students, administrators, parents, and others; and for successfully handling severe discipline problems, limitations on time, lack of student motivation, heavy paperwork demands, personality conflicts, and other pressures on today's overloaded elementary and secondary teachers.
>
> More specifically, Survival Strategies for Classroom Teachers is designed to help teachers become more artistically effective in the performance of their diverse roles, more confident about their ability to successfully influence other people with whom they interact daily.
>
> The course is unique. The first hour of each session is devoted to whole class presentation and discussion of significant principles and problems of teaching. During the second hour and a half, students are active participants in small, permanent groups known as "quasi-families." You will come together in these groups, not only to talk about the numerous problems of teaching with your peers, but, more importantly, to "become" teachers, students, administrators, and other influential people connected with the schools. Group members engage in simulation work intended to strengthen your interpersonal coping skills and develop your talents as performing artists.

After unnerving students the first session by a horror film on the current crisis of American schools and their battered teachers, I change gears markedly by presenting my model of "teaching as an art form and the authentic teacher." The third session finds us discussing "role theory

and the authentic teacher;" and, finally, we move into the heart of the matter on day number four: "the politics of teaching authentically." After that, we consider specific reference groups that can make or break a highly creative and idiosyncratic teacher unless the latter is politically sophisticated. Later sessions focus on such timely topics as severe discipline problems, teacher stress and burnout, time management, legal problems of contemporary teachers, and so on. All problems are considered both from theoretical perspectives, as well as in terms of the practical application of theory.

Most survivors of the survival strategies course inform me that it was the single most valuable course in education ever taken by them, and that it should be required of all prospective teachers.

But, like the first two illustrations presented, the comprehensive preparation model and the block program, my summer survival strategies course is no panacea either. In addition to being potentially psychologically damaging to fragile personalities in the hands of unqualified instructors, the course is demanding on the professor, who must be an accessible "authority" on a tremendous variety of teacher problems and social issues; as well as, more importantly, an adroit group dynamics leader and participant who knows intuitively just how far to push his or her students as they move along in what anthropologist George Spindler[22] has called "cultural therapy." For the experience to become a regular foundations component of every teacher credentialling program--as my students urge--massive retraining of foundations of education graduate students would be entailed, as well as substantial reduction of foundations faculty teaching loads, and major increases in standards required for admission to credential programs in the first place. Perhaps someday, but not now.

In the meantime, where does that leave foundations scholars searching for intellectually respectable, yet effective ways to promote the survival and success of prospective classroom artists in a society that discourages personal authenticity in its teachers while rewarding, instead, conformity and technical efficiency? In particular, what role can instructors of conventional social and humanistic foundations courses in unremarkable programs--the large majority--play in fostering greater awareness and acceptance of, if not skillfulness in the micropolitical realities of superior teaching?

It leaves us in the exhilarating position of confronting a major challenge to our own creative resources within limited parameters. It gives us a chance to redirect our energies from the hopeless macropolitical educational arena to one where we can more realistically expect to potently influence some individual teachers. As teaching artists, they can then set an example for future teachers, because they will have been successful in transcending difficult sociocultural and institutional barriers to personal pedagogical goals via their skillful micropolitical behavior in complex educational organizations. Additionally, it gives us the prospect of a windfall--of revitalizing the precariously situated "discipline" of social foundations itself, a discipline that continues to be perceived as esoteric and useless by most students and other teacher educators alike. Speaking only of the former, C. A. Bowers says: "They may remember that the courses dealing with the anthropology of learning or Piaget's theory of cognitive development were intellectually interesting, but they remain unable to see how the courses relate to the classroom.[23]

Contrary to the beliefs of influential detractors such as Dan Lortie,[24]

students have told me time and again that they want to ply their craft creatively without fear of negative sanctions. They want to be artists, to help students learn without interference from less knowledgeable outsiders who are nonetheless powerful, and control entrance to the profession, as well as retention and advancement. This is consistent with current research findings about teacher beliefs and values.[25] My students are intelligent, capable individuals, but they also understand who butters their bread. And so, they need help in overcoming their understandable ambivalence toward the admittedly precarious artistic model of teaching, guidance in developing their personal political understanding and skill.

Foundations instructors can make a modest contribution to the overall preparation of vitally creative teachers by helping our most committed and daring students to survive, and by encouraging the others to seek more than mere "competence" as teachers.

In every undergraduate and graduate foundations class we teach, whether it be social foundations, philosophy of education, history of education, social issues, or even educational psychology--to name but a few of the conventional ones--foundations instructors, as the <u>thinking</u> arm of teacher education, can apply their <u>critical</u>, <u>normative</u>, and <u>interpretive</u> talents to a perspective that has been downplayed in our inflated concern for only the "big" questions of educational theory and policy. Without neglecting these important issues, it is time to recognize that just as strong democracy must start from the grassroot,[26] so must educational reform emanate from the individual classroom teacher working with his or her own students in a particular school building. That is the student's psychological orientation to reality, not the macro theoretical concerns

that experienced and sophisticated foundations scholars find attractive and that become meaningful to students only very gradually. We should communicate to our students from the very beginning that teaching is, in the words of Victor Kobayashi,[27] an "individual act of grace," and that all truly effective teaching is highly personalized and stylized. Furthermore, we should start modeling our own advice by teaching far more creatively than many of us currently do. But, simultaneously, we should stress from the beginning of each course that a starving, unemployed teacher cannot perform his or her art without pupils, although a starving painter can usually find some brushes, paints, and paper! Therefore, artist teachers cannot afford the luxury of being "above politics," as most starving painters think they can. In order to experiment reflectively with their personal ideas about teaching and learning, such teachers today must be courageous, but they must also have better political skills than run-of-the-mill teachers require. Artist teachers need to understand how to interact <u>strategically</u> with officious school administrators, angry parents who might consider them "subversive," incompetent colleagues who are jealous of their pupils' successes, and culturally destabilized pupils themselves who have internalized normative expectations of schooling as a boring ritual only to find themselves deeply challenged intellectually and emotionally for the first time in the exciting classroom milieu of the artist teacher.

Whatever the course and regardless of the personal philosophy of the foundations instructor, that instructor can plan to challenge his or her students with provocative hypotheses, principles, and problems that students consider significant to <u>their</u> imminent careers, as humanists including Dewey and Carl Rogers have long urged.[28] That means constantly

relating the "ideal" to the "actual" in their instruction, rather than stressing one, the abstract "ideal" without the other in an unbalanced, artificial manner.

For example, in a philosophy of education class that compares different schools, or normative systems of thought the professor may want each student to begin thinking seriously about a personally meaningful conception of teaching "aesthetics;" i.e., "Idealism," "Realism," "Pragmatism," "Existentialism," etc. Suppose a thoughtful student admits to strong existential predilections. Of what value, other than as an academic exercise, is the evocation of such leanings, unless he or she will act upon them once in student teaching and later on the job? Existentialism is a tough philosophy to apply in today's materialistic educational culture. Most working educators and laypeople do not even know what it is; and if they do, they usually disparage it as being "Godless," "anarchistic," not "developmentally sound," "impractical," "subversive," "depressing." The litany runs on. Nonetheless, putting myself in the shoes of the student, if I choose seriously to be an existential artist of the classroom, I cannot live with my conscience if I quickly surrender to expediency once in student teaching or on my first teaching assignment on the dubious ground that existentialism is not socially approved by significant others in the educational establishment. I want my professor not only to help me locate my personal educational philosophy, but also grasp the consequences of that **responsible** choice and some of the means by which I might successfully actualize my authentic teaching values. Otherwise, my daily work as an artist will be corrupted. It is not enough to hold convictions about art; one must be in a position to defy the world, to be the rebel that Götz[29] describes without inevitably failing as one.

An existential teacher can succeed in the prototypical American elementary or secondary school, with the assistance of a caring foundations instructor able and willing to guide him or her toward a meaningful grasp of the strategically dialectical interaction that such teachers must engage in smoothly if they elect not to sell out. For the professor to ignore the dialectical implications of this difficult philosophy, as many do, is to abandon the full range of an instructor's own existential responsibilities by assuming, conveniently, that the micropolitical factors entailed in choosing a personal philosophy will be taken care of somewhere else somehow.

If teaching philosophy of education ought to "organically" include study of the "praxatics" of philosophic choice, the basic, required social or cultural foundations course emphatically must. This typically overview course provides rich opportunities to startle the beginner in education with the related notions that teaching is a highly creative process, and that as a teacher one will be participating directly in one of civilization's most noble, humane endeavors. Having shaken the students with such a revelation, however, the instructor now has the obligation to fully support rhetoric with substantive concepts, principles, and facts. Indeed, students will reject the audacious instructor who offers little more than idealistic platitudes which appear to contradict their past and present experiences with schools.[30]. The entire social/cultural foundations course can be made an experience in which students become familiarized with the complexities of contemporary education by visualizing themselves and their own students as the central figures in a larger institutional drama whose actors and their scripts cannot be disdained with impunity. The kinds of questions to be pondered in this basic course are exemplified by the following:

-How do I teach creatively to the changing, skeptical, largely urban student of the present?

-How do I reach the harried working single parents of my most apathetic students?

-How do I convince the administrative bureaucrat who manages PS 93 to not pester me about consistently meeting or exceeding arbitrary norms on standardized tests mandated by the state?

-How do I teach my own way when the culture of my school pressures me to teach in the way that other teachers have "consensually" agreed upon?

-How do I join (or not join at all) the "wrong" teachers organization when the system curriculum director expects me to pay dues to the "right" one?

-How do I obtain expensive equipment to conduct a long term experiment when the educational budget has been cut?

-How do I deal with the troubled child who has recently confided in me that he or she is heavily into drugs?

-How do I teach a seminal race relations unit in social studies without using the state-mandated, but worthless social studies text?

-How do I handle, with psychological balance and behavioral finesse, day-to-day pedagogical dilemmas that have no apparent solutions in a culture that insists that every problem can be solved?[31]

The above "how" questions illustrate the possibilities for personalizing the basic foundations course, and helping prospective teachers think about the micropolitical realities of their work while simultaneously studying

the broader topics and policy issues typically associated with such courses: i.e., the changing family, the peergroup, the financing and governance of public schooling, teacher organizations and collective bargaining, cultural pluralism and social stratification, legal and ethical aspects of teaching, the nature of professionalism, and so forth.

In the interests of brevity, these two illustrations--one relating to philosophy of education and the other to the basic social foundations course --will have to suffice to demonstrate that foundational instruction generally can and should integrate the conceptual polarities advanced; namely, that teaching is a genuine art form that must also be understood as necessitating sophisticated and highly skillful employment of interpersonal politics daily, both inside the classroom with youngsters and beyond with adults. It goes without saying that the details of such instruction will vary with the particular instructor, the nature of his or her courses, and the level of the students being taught.

Conclusion

One need not personally be extraordinarily gifted in order to teach teachers to be politically sophisticated classroom artists. But, one <u>does</u> need to believe that the high calling of foundations instruction itself requires fundamental reconceptualization if it is to survive the skepticism and anti-intellectualism of our time, and contribute its critical, normative, and interpretive fruits to the revitalization of teaching and learning in our educationally devastated and demoralized social order.

Ann Lieberman has decried the lack of attention paid teachers and teaching by educational scholars in this society:

> ....The literature has been dominated by both policy and managerial perspectives. We have tried here to represent a perspective long absent in the literature, the perspective of the teacher, the ultimate recipient of all the improvement efforts. Without an adequate understanding and sensitivity to the social [substitute "political"] reality of the teacher, we cannot hope to make a real difference. With such understanding, we have a chance.[32]

Her criticism is especially apropos foundations scholars. We have been caught up in the "grand" issues affecting education. Interesting as macro, or institutional level theorizing may be, it has not, by itself, proven productive of significant reform of the schooling process. It is too disconnected from the dynamics of everyday classroom life to impact influentially upon reconstructing that life in positive ways. Foundational scholarship that holds forth more realistic promise for improving the educational future of our fast-changing, anomic society will focus on the micro, or ideographic level directly with the individual teacher in the trenches. It will seek to empower that individual to create aesthetically pleasing--hence, educationally tenable-- learning environments fluidly, in strategic defiance of constraining institutional complexity and bureaucratic rigidity. So, we must take that teacher far more seriously as a reflectively self-directing professional when we think about the unchartable future, and in planning our programs and courses for the next academic year.

Not long ago, Louis Rubin expressed a generalized hope for teaching becoming an art:

> ....Teacher preparation [foundations] must do everything possible to rekindle idealism and to restore the glory of the mission. The time has taken a fearsome toll on education, and many teachers and administrators are on the raw edge of despair. Disillusioned and embittered, they no longer care. There was a day--a day that must be returned--when individuals with great gifts thought the teaching of children a worthy lifetime endeavor. It still is.[33] [Emphasis added]

Eloquent words, indeed. But, they must be backed up with practical strategies for surviving the days and years of a creative lifetime with children. And, that is where the instructor of educational foundations may make a most substantial, if limited, contribution, whether fortunate enough to be involved in experimenting with the implementation of major new models for preparing artist teachers, block programs, survival strategies courses; or simply teaching conventional courses in a new key.

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Abstract

An Individual Paper Proposal for the 1988 AESA Convention, Toronto

Title: "The Micropolitics of Artistic Teaching: Implications for Foundations Instruction"

The author of this interdisciplinary paper is a longstanding advocate of reconceptualizing and reconstructing teaching as an authentic art form on the institutional, or macro level. Nonetheless, he doubts that such a major undertaking is possible at present. His previous research demonstrates that the educationally utilitarian American people, their opinion leaders, and most influential schoolpeople and teacher educators are ideologically committed to scientific/technocratic models of schooling and teaching efficacy, rather than to one which conceives of professional teaching in schools as essentially aesthetic endeavor with non-guaranteeable learning outcomes both for the individual learner and the larger society.

Does this mean that proponents of teaching as art should resignedly abandon their efforts to bring about radical change of the occupational zeitgeist? Not at all. The need for such change is great, and the prospects for success considerable. However, they are advised to redirect their intellectual attention from the unprofitable macro theoretical cultural scene to the "micropolitics" of educational reform; i.e., the theory and dynamics of strategic interpersonal interaction intended to secure professionally defensible goals. They must concentrate on helping the individual teacher ("client") revise his or her professional self-identity and become empowered as a genuine artist of the classroom, despite the enormous occupational role constraints to be encountered. Artist teachers need aid in becoming politically sophisticated, far more so than "ordinary" systemically "well

adjusted" teaching technicians. This paper explores their unique micropolitical dilemma, and provides a framework for actualizing their philosophical values creatively and with aesthetic autonomy.

The implications of a micropolitics of artistic teaching for teacher educators--specifically those of us in the social and humanistic foundations of education--are significant. They are detailed in the paper. First and foremost, foundations scholars/instructors may make a special academic contribution to the improvement of teaching by realistically addressing the prospects of achieving artistic excellence in cultural and active transactional contexts in their pre-service and advanced courses. In addition, a "windfall" of critical, normative, and interpretive attention to the strategic concerns of individual teachers seeking to survive and thrive may be revitalization of the precariously situated "discipline" of social foundations itself.

Serious scholarly work on teaching viewed as art is yet in its infancy. Keeping this fact in mind, I suggest grouping this interdisciplinary paper with other original conceptions of teaching and the evolving role of the social foundations in contemporary teacher education. An alternative way of thinking about grouping might be in terms of social change and occupational role socialization--although the latter construct has become limiting in the author's mind over the years. At any rate, the paper is concerned with the theory and dynamics of achieving a desirable, albeit difficult objective pragmatically. That objective is the professional preparation of teaching artists who can set an example for future teachers, because they have been <u>successful</u> in transcending difficult sociocultural barriers to personal authenticity via their skillful micropolitical behavior in educational organizations.